



Tapuitema

...ina ia manino le folauā.

Official American Samoa Government Weekly Newsletter



In This Issue:

*Anti underage
drinking
legislation
signed into law
pg. 2*

*Governor
disapproves
DBAS
appropriation
legislation
pg. 2*

*Dr. Seth
Galea'i is new
ASCC Pres.
pg. 3*

*ASPA-ASEPA
cross
connection and
backflow
prevention
training
pg. 4*

*PC Tufele Li'a
confirmed as
LBJ board
member
pg. 4*

*ASCC
Admin. Prof.
Week
pg. 5*

*Historical Notes
& more...*

*For additional
news,
information
and much,
much more
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Friday, May 9, 2008

Vol. III, No. 19

Territory gets \$20.4 million from US Treasury for tax rebate checks

The local economy will see a tremendous boost, thanks to the \$20.4 million received this week from the United States Treasury for the distribution of tax stimulus rebates. The amount was issued based on an estimate by the Treasury Secretary as being equal to the aggregate benefits provided to residents of American Samoa based on local taxes.

Governor Togiola Tulafono made the announcement this week, after the United States Treasury accepted ASG's proposed plan for the disbursement of tax rebates from President Bush's economic growth package, or tax stimulus rebate.

It was two weeks ago that the Governor submitted the territory's plan to the US Treasury. The plan is based on information obtained from 2007 income tax returns filed this year. (Federal law provides that in order for the territory to be able to receive money from the US Treasury, it must produce a plan, approved by the Secretary of Treasury, under which American Samoa will promptly distribute the rebates to its residents.)

The Governor says the money is being held in a separate account, and he expressed his delight with the new funds that will be injected into the local economy. He says tax rebate checks will be issued within two weeks after a final tax system check, which will include eligibility and qualifications criteria check and recalculations by the Treasury Department and the Tax Office.

The Governor urges local taxpayers to listen out for the announcement of when the rebate checks will be distributed, and not to visit the Disbursing Office in Utulei for checks, yet. The rebate checks will be issued in alphabetical order and staggered throughout the week to avoid congestion and overcrowding of the Tax Office, as the ASG is expected to release close to 3,000 rebate checks during the first week of distribution.

"This is great news for the people of American Samoa as it will give us a big boost in our economy," Togiola said. "I wish to kindly ask the public for their patience in allowing the Treasury and the Tax Office staff to perform their duties in testing and checking the level of payments for each local tax payer and the information that it currently has in its system."

The checks are not ready yet and because the tax stimulus rebate comes from federal funds, the Governor says "we must be sure that we have the accurate numbers and not issue above the amount." The tax stimulus rebates will provide "eligible" tax payers with payments of \$300 to a maximum of \$600 per tax payer, and \$300 per qualifying child. According to the Tax Office, not everyone qualifies.

The Governor is grateful to the Department of Treasury and its staff for working diligently to secure the economic growth package for the Territory. "I wish to commend our Treasurer Gaea Perefoti Failautusi and Tax Manager Melvin Joseph for their excellent work with the U.S. Treasury to ensure that our people in American Samoa who are eligible for the tax rebate will receive it," said Togiola. "I also wish to give special thanks to Mel Joseph for developing a successful plan with the U.S. Treasurer that assures all of our eligible tax payers are covered in this single payment."

(Continued on page 6)

Anti underage drinking legislation signed into law

Governor Togiola Tulafono has approved and signed into law new legislation that makes it a crime for people under 21 years old to possess or consume beer or alcohol.

The approval of the legislation comes after a government attorney reported to the Fono that more than 90% of crimes involving young people were committed while they were under the influence of alcohol.

The bill goes into effect immediately.

In his letter to the Fono notifying them of his approval,

Governor Togiola said alcoholic consumption has become a problem with many residents which sadly, includes those under 21 years of age. He added that domestic violence, driving under the influence, and public peace disturbances are just some of the crimes that are committed when alcohol is consumed irresponsibly.

According to the Governor, the bill is a step towards reducing social problems.

The bill is an answer to the courts long time wish of making it illegal for minors to drink or possess alcohol, and it came about as a result of a draft submitted last year to the chairmen of the Judiciary committees in both the Senate and House of Representatives by District Court Judge John L. Ward.

HISTORICAL NOTES

By: Stan Sorensen, Historian, Office of the Governor

On May 3, 1926, the last issue of relief food for the January 1, 1926 hurricane was dispensed on Tutuila.

On May 3, 1979, Continental Airlines began its inaugural service from Pago Pago, American Samoa to Los Angeles, California.

On May 4, 1897, Phelps von Rottenburg, who later changed his name to Phelps Phelps and became American Samoa's first appointed civil governor on February 23, 1951, was born in Bonn, Germany to Dr. Franz von Rottenburg and Marian Phelps von Rottenburg.

On May 5, 1768, French navigator Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, aboard *La Boudouse* and accompanied by *L' Etoile*, sighted the Samoan islands. Impressed by the Samoans' ship handling skills, he named the archipelago "The Navigator Islands," and they were known by that name for over a century. Bougainville compared the Samoans to the Tahitians by saying that "I do not believe these islanders are as gentle as our Cythereans. Their appearance was more savage, and they displayed far more mistrust."

On May 5, 1928, Western Samoa's new Administrator, Colonel Stephen Shepard Allen, arrived in Apia from New Zealand. He was accompanied by 74 men of the newly created Samoa Military Police, armed with rifles, pistols and two Lewis machine guns.

On May 5, 1933, Western Samoan *Mau* leaders Olaf Frederick Nelson and Edwin William Gurr, having finished their terms of exile, left Auckland for Apia.

On May 5, 1942, SS *Kit Carson* arrived in Western Samoa with construction materials for military bases.

On May 7, 1901, Frank James Cooper, a two-time Oscar-winning actor (*Sergeant York*, 1941; *High Noon*, 1952) who later changed his name to Gary Cooper, was born in Helena, Montana. Cooper starred in the 1953 film *Return to Paradise*, which was directed by Mark Robson and was filmed at Lefaga, Western Samoa.

On May 8, 1871, Charles Thomas ("*Sale*") Taylor, Robert Louis Stevenson's translator and "sesquipedalian young half-caste" was born in Apia.

On May 8, 1892, the first Samoan Catholic Priest, Father Ioane Tofe, was ordained at Vaea, Upolu by Bishop Jean-Armand Lamaze, Vicar Apostolic of Central Oceania and Administrator of Samoa.

On May 8, 1942, USS *Sumner* arrived in Western Samoa with military supplies and equipment. She investigated Vailele, Fagaloa and Saluafata Bays for possible use as naval facilities.

On May 9, 1838, the London Missionary Society established a church at Pago Pago, Tutuila.

On May 9, 1961, a plebiscite was held in Western Samoa to determine whether the voters agreed with the 1960 constitution, and whether they agreed that Western Samoa should become independent on January 1, 1962. To the first question, 31,426 voters answered "Yes," 4,909 "No," and 1,562 "Informal." To the second question, 29,882 voted "Yes," 5,108 "No," and 2,907 "Informal." A total of 37,897 votes were cast.

On May 9, 1962, American Samoa's Governor, Hyrum Rex Lee approved American Samoa's new Merit System Law, following its passage by the Legislature.

Governor disapproves legislation allocating \$1M annual appropriation to DBAS

A Fono bill seeking to provide an annual allocation of \$1 million to the Development Bank of American Samoa did not get approval from Governor Togiola Tulafono.

Togiola told the Fono leadership that while he applauds and appreciates the local Legislature's consideration of DBAS, he does not feel that combining the collection of the funds under the auspices of the Income Tax Reserve fund is appropriate, as it will only cause confusion and difficulty in accountability. (Under the bill, the funding source for the annual appropriation is the current Income Tax Reserve Account, which is used to fund tax refunds).

(Continued on page 3)

ASG RADIO PROGRAM With: Gov. Togiola Tulafono

On: Showers of Blessings FM 104.7
Saturdays @ 7a.m.- 9:00a.m. Call: 699-8123/8124



Dr. Seth Galea'i appointed as new ASCC president

Long time educator Dr. Seth Galea'i has been appointed by the Board of Higher Education as the new president of the American Samoa Community College (ASCC). Galea'i replaces former ASCC president Dr. Adele Satele-Galea'i who stepped down from the post, citing medical reasons. (The new ASCC president served as vice president of the college when Satele-Galea'i was still in office, and was later named acting president after Satele-Galea'i stepped down).

Galea'i was selected from a list of three candidates. The other two applicants were Dr. Kathleen Kolhoff, director of the ASCC's Office of Institutional Advancement, and Tialuga Seloti, director of the American Samoa Teacher Education Program (ASTEP).

Galea'i's new role at the college was made public yesterday when he was presented to the faculty and administration during a special meeting.

Galea'i said he accepts the position with humility and respect, and in his new role as president, he will make ASCC's accreditation a top priority as its 6-year term is up for full review later this year in October.

Accreditation is a key issue, as it is necessary in order for the college to receive grants, and for students to qualify for Pell grants and have their credits transferred to other US institutions of higher learning.

With an enrollment of about 1,700 students, ASCC is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), a division of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

Galea'i promises to uphold the values of ASCC as the territory's only college continues to move forward.

As ASCC president, Galea'i is the chief executive of the college, serving at the pleasure of the Board of Higher Education. One of his duties is to recommend policies to the BHE. He is authorized by the BHE to exercise broad discretionary power per the policies, goals, and general direction of the college, as established by the board.

Galea'i graduated from Samoana High School and earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees, as well as his doctorate of education from the University of Hawaii - Manoa.

He served as both a classroom teacher and a school principal for Leone, Samoana, and Faga'itua High Schools. In addition, He was a planning coordinator with the local Department of Education. He joined the ASCC team in 1990 as the director for ASTEP and was later selected as the college's Dean of Instruction in 1998.

Governor disapproves legislation...*(continued from page 2)*

In a letter to the Fono, Togiola wrote, "Like you, I am very much supportive of making funds available to DBAS for housing and business loans, and I am in favor of creating a separate funding account to be directed to DBAS for its continuing needs and funded from the same source as the tax reserve fund, but only after the tax reserve fund is fully funded."

The Governor explained that ASG has contingent liabilities in excess of \$1 million of potential tax refunds to at least one company and therefore, ASG needs to have the reserve fund fully funded, considering this liability.

Togiola said that he does not support limiting the use of funds for business loans only, adding that he feels there is a need to give DBAS flexibility to utilize the funds for home loans as well, if the DBAS board determines that there is a critical need in housing rather than commercial enterprise.

The Governor said he is looking forward to working with the local Legislature in July to address the situation through a new measure.

10TH FESTIVAL OF PACIFIC ARTS COMING SOON...
PLEASE KEEP AMERICAN SAMOA CLEAN!
FA'AMAMA AMERIKA SAMOA!

ASPA-ASEPA host first ever cross connection and backflow prevention training

A total of 30 people representing the Department of Public Works, Department of Public Health, as well as staff members from the American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency and the American Samoa Power Authority took part in the first ever three-day cross connection control and backflow prevention training conducted by Michael Patten of the Washington Environmental Training and Research Center (WETRC) at Green River Community College in Auburn, Washington.

The training addressed the critical compliance area of backflow prevention and cross-connection program requirements. Therefore, participants included personnel responsible in dealing with water, public health, new installation, building permits, and compliance issues.

The 3-day course enabled the respective staff from the various agencies to develop or improve their knowledge of cross connection, and control program development, administration, and management. Course topics included public health aspects, risk and liability management, control procedures and assemblies, inspection priorities and procedures, and program management issues.

ASPA's Water and Special Projects Division, with the guidance and coordination of Commander Brad Rea, P.E. - who also serves as special assistant to the ASEPA director - worked to identify a '*customized for ASPA*' training to focus on the territory's unique water situation and critical needs. The training was partially funded by the US Environmental Protection Agency with a local match from ASPA.

ASPA invited the Department of Public Health and Department of Public Works, because they are also involved in the process of compliance, health, and building permits. With the completion of the training, ASPA intends to provide more public information to their local customers, as well as work with agency partners to assure program compliance in dealing with cross connection and backflow prevention.

The CEO and management of ASPA continue to seek ways to attract experts in the critical areas of utility service, in an effort to develop and strengthen the skills, knowledge, and abilities of the ASPA staff.

PC Tufele Li'amatua confirmed as newest LBJ board member

Manu'a District Governor, Paramount Chief Tufele Li'amatua was confirmed with a 14-2 Senate vote as a new member of the LBJ Medical Center's board of directors. (Under local law, LBJ board members need only be confirmed by the Fono's upper chamber).

During the announcement of Tufele's appointment, Governor Togiola Tulafono said that Tufele will fill the required position of an "at large member" on the board.

At his confirmation hearing yesterday, Tufele told senators that he believes the board's sole responsibility is to set policies, procedures, and regulations that management can follow.

Tufele is the current District Governor for the Manu'a Islands and, at one point, served as the Lt. Governor of American Samoa. He comes with extensive years of service and a long list of government service stints on his resume, including his tenure as police commissioner and chairman of the Future Political Status Study Commission.

With his confirmation, Tufele will now join LBJ board chairman Moananu Va, former chairman Charles Warren, and Department of Commerce deputy director Lelei Peau on the hospital board.

Board member Dr. Fred Uhrle is believed to be stepping down from his position soon, and Governor Togiola said he is considering an appointment to fill the vacancy that will be created by Dr. Uhrle's departure from the board.



ASCC Celebrates Administrative Professionals Week

*By James Kneubuhl,
ASCC Press Officer*

ASCC Human Resources Director Komiti Panama-Emmsley (center) and her staff organized a series of events at the College last week as part of Administrative Professionals Week. (Photo: J. Kneubuhl)



The hardworking administrative assistants and secretaries at the American Samoa Community College (ASCC) enjoyed three days of training and recognition last week in celebration of Administrative Professionals Week. Across the nation, offices in the public and private sectors participated in this event held during the last full week of April, with Wednesday of that week designated as Administrative Professionals Day. While this year marks the first time ASCC has joined in Administrative Professionals Week festivities, ASCC Human Resources Director Komiti Panama-Emmsley said that based on the success of this year's program, she hopes to make it a yearly event.

Besides providing ASCC administrative assistants and secretaries with much-deserved recognition for their efforts, Panama-Emmsley emphasized their "professional" competencies by organizing a workshop on customer service, acculturation, stress management and work ethics. According to Panama-Emmsley, "As soon as you walk into an office, or someone there answers the telephone, you can always tell whether or not the organization has a good grasp of customer service. Secretaries represent the frontline of any organization, so they provide the first impression customers get of their whole operation. We all know that in our dealings with any office, things go more smoothly when the people are treated with professionalism and courtesy, but many secretaries simply haven't received any training at this critical area, although they may be highly skilled in other areas."

With this in mind, the workshop put together by Mrs. Panama-Emmsley included a number of ASCC administrators giving brief presentations on various aspects of the ASCC mission and vision, professionalism, and customer service, including President Dr. Seth Galea'i, Chief Financial Officer CGFM, Ph.D. Falema'o Pili, and Small Business Development Center Director Herbert Thweatt. Two especially thought provoking presentations came from Sylvia Tauiliili of the Nursing Department, who talked about Stress Management, and Leusoga "Bill" Emmsley, Dean of the Institute of Trades & Technology, who shared his insights on Acculturation in the Workplace. "Our unique cultural situation definitely influences our attitudes towards customer service," reflected Panama-Emmsley, "sometimes in a good way, sometimes not. Leusoga stressed that we should understand both Samoan values as well as western values when dealing professionally with people."

The ASCC activities culminated with a special luncheon this past Friday at the Equator for the College's Administrative Professionals as well as the Deans and Directors they work under. The staff members received certificates of recognition for having completed the week's training sessions, and listened to a presentation by special guest speaker Lētofa Manū Taialofa Naseri, Director of Human Resources and Administration at the National University of Samoa (NUS), who spoke passionately about the responsibilities of the administrative professional. "Administrative professionals hold the values that everyone in their organization should emulate," reflected Naseri. Several of the ASCC administrative professionals on hand commented on how much they had gained from the three-day event. Joann Vaka of the Business Office described the training as "profound" and said, "They should make this sort of thing available to all of the staff and faculty". Jason Hollister of GEAR-UP commented, "The presentation on acculturation really opened my eyes as to how we can find a bridge between the values of the two main cultures here in our islands."

(Continued on page 6)

ASCC Administrative Professionals Week...*(continued from page 5)*

Across the United States, offices recognize and celebrate the work of secretaries, administrative assistants, and other office professionals for their growing and diverse contributions to the workplace during Administrative Professionals Week. The International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) and a consortium of office product manufacturers originally organized the event as "National Secretaries Week" in 1952. U.S. Secretary of Commerce Charles Sawyer proclaimed the first National Secretaries Week, held June 1-7, 1952, with Wednesday, June 4th designated as the first National Secretaries Day.

In 1955, the National Secretaries Association changed the date of National Secretaries Week to the last full week of April, with Wednesday of that week designated National Secretaries Day. The name changed again to Professional Secretaries Week in 1981, when the National Secretaries Association became Professional Secretaries International (PSI). In 1998, PSI changed its name to the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP), to further reflect the expanding role of office staff. In 2000, the IAAP announced that the name would change from "Professional Secretaries Day" to "Administrative Professionals Day", in order to keep in step with the changing job titles and expanding responsibilities of today's administrative workforce.

Governor Togiola wants to fix school bus problem with \$20M loan

Come July when the Fono reconvenes for its fourth regular session, Governor Togiola Tulafono will make known his wish that funds from the \$20-million-dollar loan from the American Samoa Government Employees' Retirement Fund be utilized to upgrade the school bus fleet for the local Department of Education.

Togiola made the announcement during his weekend radio program this morning, in response to a caller who said that kids from his family didn't attend school last week because of scheduling problems with school bus transportation.

Togiola said that in July, one of the things he will include on the list of projects to be funded with the \$20M loan will be the DOE school bus fleet.

The Governor estimates that at least \$1 million will be needed to equip the existing DOE fleet with new buses, as well as spare parts. He noted that some of buses are more than a decade old, hence making it very hard to get them repaired and back on the road.

According to the Governor, DOE is finding it difficult to repair some of the buses as they were purchased for a much lower price from the US General Service Administration (GSA), which does not provide spare parts, therefore making it difficult to find the right off-island company from which the spare parts can be obtained.

Meanwhile, Senate President Lolo Moliga has also expressed concern over the school bus problem, concerns that were raised through a letter to Governor Togiola Tulafono in which he described the school bus issue as a "potentially dangerous situation."

According to Lolo, the Senate is ready to support plans the Administration may have, in addressing the shortages of school buses. He said inquiries have revealed that of the entire school bus fleet, only 10 buses are fully functional and are in compliance with safety standards. But the information contradicts figures from the DOE main office which claims that a total of 12 buses are transporting the territory's children.

Lolo said the paramount concern is the safety of the school children, and an appropriate investigation is yet to be conducted to determine the possibility of using private buses to help resolve the current problem.

Tax rebate checks... *(continued from page 1)*

He added, "With the high cost of gasoline and food, this is wonderful news for our people and our economy." People must file a tax return for their 2007 income to be eligible for a rebate check, and the rebate checks will be issued in the order of when the tax payer filed their tax return prior to the tax filing deadline of April 15th.

Payments based on 2007 individual income tax returns filed on or before April 15 will be processed until July 31, 2008, and those who file their returns after April 15 but before November 30 will be paid by the local Treasury Department by December 31, 2008.

According to the approved plan, funds received from the federal government for the rebates are not to be used for administrative expenses, and ASG is required to provide quarterly reports to the federal government showing the amount of money in the trust account and the total paid out for that specific quarter.

All unused funds must be returned to the US Treasury Department.